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SUBJECT: A/S BLAKE DISCUSSES STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP DIALOGS
WITH INDIAN MEA

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Assistant Secretary Robert Blake met with Indian Joint Secretary (AMS) Gaitri Kumar July 21 and outlined next steps in the new Strategic Dialogue. They agreed that Counter Terrorism was an immediate focus and that Home Minister Chidambaram should visit Washington as soon as possible. They identified the possibility of holding the first energy dialog between Steven Chu and Indian Renewable Energy Minister Farooq Abdullah on the sidelines of an October climate change and renewable energy conference in India. Deputy Chair of the Planning Commission Montek Ahluwalia plans to attend the G-8 and G-20 meetings in Pittsburgh as a sherpa creating an opportunity for a formal economic dialog meeting. A/S Blake suggested that Indian Education Minister Kapil Sibal reach out to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and schedule a visit. Gaitri conveyed that the Indian Parliament would like to invite the First Lady to participate in the launch of a new GOI education campaign in New Delhi. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Robert Blake met with Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Joint Secretary (Americas) Gaitri Kumar on July 21. A/S Blake offered thanks at the conclusion of a successful visit by Secretary Clinton. Gaitri said that Clinton was "amazing" with an impressive grasp on Indian sensitivities.

¶3. (SBU) Blake and Gaitri discussed how to proceed with the strategic partnership dialogs between the United States and India and agreed that a robust schedule of visits would set deadlines to motivate progress on deliverables. They agreed to aim high on identifying specific, credible deliverables for Prime Minister Singh's November 24th visit to the U.S. and for a possible high level visit to India sometime in 2010. They also agreed to quickly prioritize dialogs, and to encourage individual agencies to focus on them as soon as possible. Gaitri indicated that this is the approach the Deputy Chair of the Planning Commission would like to take and that he will get cabinet ministers involved and personally work with PM Singh in order to get appropriate resources and officers.

¶4. (SBU) They identified counterterrorism as a more immediate agenda item, and agreed that Home Secretary Chidambaram should visit D.C. very soon. Blake emphasized that Chidambaram's counterparts in D.C. were ready to meet with him and suggested setting dates for a visit in mid October of 2009 to encourage increased cooperation on training and intelligence sharing. Gaitri agreed to communicate the suggestion to Chidambaram promptly. (Note: Chidambaram's staff have now suggested that he was ready to visit in late August.)

¶5. (SBU) Clean energy also presented immediate opportunities. Gaitri suggested that since FutureGen is currently restructuring, it could be used as one deliverable for a visit. Blake pointed out that Steven Chu has been

invited to a climate change and renewable energy conference in India in October. He suggested that Indian Renewable Energy Minister Farooq Abdullah invite Chu as a keynote speaker and conduct the first energy dialog meeting on the sidelines of the conference. Gaitri responded enthusiastically, saying that Abdullah is enthusiastic and energetic.

¶6. (SBU) Regarding the economic dialog, Gaitri said that GOI has an economic agenda paper to share with the U.S., and noted Deputy Chairman Ahluwalia would plan to go as a sherpa to G-20 and G-8 meetings in Pittsburgh. She suggested that a meeting to set a mutual agenda could be scheduled during that time. Blake pointed out that the economic dialog receives the input of the CEO's Forum, and informed Gaitri that the U.S. CEO's Forum is being restructured with a set of criteria and an application process for members. The forum will not be reconstituted in time for the UN General Assembly session in September, but the U.S. goal is to be ready for substantive meetings on the sidelines of the PMs visit. Gaitri agreed with the proposed timeline.

¶7. (SBU) In the education dialog, Blake suggested that Indian Education Minister Kapil Sibal reach out to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and schedule a visit. It would be best if Kapil went to the U.S. first, followed by alternating visits, said Blake. Gaitri pointed out that before he was Secretary, Duncan had reached out to GOI to bring Indian math and science teachers to Chicago schools, a project that is now under way. As a deliverable for President Obama's visit, Gaitri suggested setting up partnerships between U.S. and Indian universities.

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¶8. (SBU) Gaitri conveyed that the Indian Parliament would like to invite the First Lady to participate in the launch of a new education campaign in New Delhi. The Foreign Minister and Foreign Secretary have agreed that Kapil may invite her. Gaitri said that the MEA would share the information with the U.S. Embassy.

¶9. (U) Assistant Secretary Blake did not have the opportunity to clear this message.
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